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ABSTRACT

This followup study investigates whether (1) satisfaction of an individual with an occupation is a function of the correspondence between work needs of the individual and reinforcer pattern of the work environment; (2) satisfactoriness of an individual in an occupation is a function of the correspondence between work abilities of the individual and ability requirements of the work environment; (3) tenure of an individual in an occupation is a function of the concurrent correspondence of needs and reinforcers and abilities and ability requirements; and (4) whether work histories will exhibit change in the direction of increasing correspondence between the individual and the work environment. All subjects selected are involved in making vocational choices appropriate to their abilities, needs and interests. (Author/YRJ)

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Work Adjustment Project Follow-up Study:

Preliminary Findings

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Work Adjustment Project

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Work Adjustment Project Follow-up Study

Preliminary Findings

Over the last 35 years, a number of studies have investigated vocational adjustment from a longitudinal perspective. The Birmingham studies (Hunt, 1943; Hunt & Smith, 1945), Strong's 18-year follow-up (Strong, 1955), the Career Pattern Studies (Super, 1957; Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968), the Harvard Studies of Career Development (Tiedeman & O'Hara, Note 3), Holland's studies (Holland, 1962, 1963; Holland & Nichols, 1964), Project Talent (Flanagan, 1966), and the Vocational Development Project (Crites, Note 1) have examined different aspects of vocational adjustment over different time spans. Some have focused on description, others on prediction; some on the process of vocational adjustment, others on its outcomes. The present five-year follow-up study is largely concerned with the prediction of specific vocational outcomes. It draws upon an established theoretical framework to develop predictions and explain results, and it incorporates in its design: (a) population comparisons; (b) repeated assessments over time; and (c) multiple criteria to evaluate the relative predictive efficiency of selected vocational assessment and counseling tools.

The conceptual basis of the WAP Follow-up Study is the Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1964; Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1968; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969), (See Table 1 & Figure 1). According to this theory, work adjustment is an interaction between the individual

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and the work environment. This interaction results in the multiple criterion outcomes of satisfactoriness of job performance, satisfaction with the job, and job tenure. Prediction of these criterion outcomes is based on the correspondence between the individual's work personality and the work environment. Satisfactoriness of job performance is predicted from the correspondence between the individual's abilities and the work environment's ability requirements. Satisfaction with the job follows from the correspondence between the individual's needs and the work environment's reinforcer system. Tenure results from satisfactoriness and satisfaction (therefore from work-personality--work-environment correspondence).

The purpose of the follow-up study is to investigate the following four hypotheses derived from the nine propositions of the Theory of Work Adjustment (see Table 2).

1. Satisfaction of an individual with an occupation is a function of the correspondence (C_{N-R}) between work needs of the individual and reinforcer pattern of the work environment. Individuals in occupations for which C_{N-R} is high are more likely to be satisfied than those in occupations for which C_{N-R} is not high.
2. Satisfactoriness of an individual in an occupation is a function of the correspondence (C_{A-R}) between work abilities of the individual and ability requirements of the work environment. Individuals in occupations for which C_{A-R} is high are more likely to be satisfactory than those in occupations for which C_{A-R} is not high.
3. Tenure of an individual in an occupation is a function of the concurrent correspondence of needs and reinforcers (C_{N-R}) and abilities and ability requirements (C_{A-R}). Individuals are

more likely to enter and remain in occupations for which both C_{N-R} and C_{A-R} are high than those for which one or both are not high.

4. Work histories will exhibit, on the whole, change in the direction of increasing correspondence between the individual and the work environment. Individuals for whom correspondence with their occupation is high are more likely to remain in the same or similar occupations than those for whom correspondence is not high.

Investigation of these hypotheses requires (see Figure 2) the measurement of abilities and needs of individuals, ability requirements and reinforcer systems of work environments, and the definition and measurement of the criteria of satisfactoriness, satisfaction, and tenure. All individuals being studied have completed the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB; U.S. Department of Labor, 1970b) and the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ: Gay, Weiss, Hendel, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1971; Lofquist & Dawis, 1975). Occupational Aptitude Patterns (OAPs; U.S. Department of Labor, 1970a) and Occupational Reinforcer Patterns (ORPs; Borgen, Weiss, Tinsley, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1968; Rosen, Hendel, Weiss, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1972) provide descriptions of work environments. The Minnesota Satisfactoriness Scales (MSS; Gibson, Weiss, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1970), and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) measure the criteria of satisfactoriness and satisfaction.

The subjects are being sampled from three populations: Vocational Assessment Clinic (VAC) clients, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) clients, and Suburban Hennepin County Area Vocational Technical School (SHCAVTS) students. All subjects are involved in making vocational choices appropriate to their abilities, needs, and interests.

The three different samples will be followed up one month, four months, eight months, one year, 18 months, two years, and annually for three years, a total period of five years after the subjects complete their respective programs.

This report presents the preliminary results of a follow-up of 290 clients who completed the VAC program between June 20, 1974 and December 31, 1975. The VAC program provides vocational assessment and career counseling services to non-University-student clients from the community on a fee-payment basis. The present pilot study is intended to investigate: (a) the relationship of job satisfaction to need-reinforcer correspondence; and (b) the effect of moderator variables, such as sex and satisfaction with the VAC experience, on the relationship between job satisfaction and need-reinforcer correspondence.

Method

The Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ) is completed by VAC clients after their intake interviews at the Clinic. The MIQ is a self-report inventory of 20 work-related needs in a paired comparison format. Corresponding measurements of job reinforcers are available in the occupational reinforcer patterns (ORPs) previously developed from supervisor reinforcer ratings by the Work Adjustment Project (a more detailed discussion of ORP development is presented in Borgen, Weiss, Tinsley, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1968b). The 20 ORP scales parallel the 20 need scales of the MIQ.

A follow-up questionnaire was developed to assess: (a) outcomes of and satisfaction with the vocational assessment experience; (b) current vocational status, goals and behaviors; and (c) satisfaction with vocational plans and status. The questionnaire includes open-ended items covering vocational status and multiple-choice items covering vocational

goals and satisfaction with the vocational assessment process. The Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank (JSB; Hoppock, 1935) was included in the questionnaire to assess overall job satisfaction.

The follow-up questionnaire was mailed to 290 VAC clients. These clients had completed the VAC program from one month to one year prior to the date of mailing. A total of 234 usable questionnaires was received resulting in an overall rate of return of 81%. The respondents included 207 females and 27 males whose median age was 30.4 years. At the time of follow-up, 48% were employed full-time, 15% were employed part-time, 7% were seeking work, and 30% were not in the labor force. Of the 110 clients who were employed full-time, 67 were employed in occupations for which ORPs were available. Of these 67 clients, 63 were included in the analysis. Four clients were excluded because they did not complete the JSB.

Two analyses were conducted with individuals who were employed full-time. First, the MIQ-ORP correspondence score was correlated with the JSB satisfaction score. As a check on the correlation, the subjects were cross-classified by splitting the distribution of correspondence scores into thirds and the JSB satisfaction scores at the median. Chi-square and an index of predictive association, lambda (Hays, 1963, p. 608), were computed from the 2 x 3 table.

Second, the correlation coefficient between correspondence scores and satisfaction scores was recomputed within subgroups of subjects. The variables used to assign subjects to subgroups were: a) sex; b) rated helpfulness of the vocational assessment experience; and c) rated agreement between the subject's vocational plans at case closure and vocational behavior at the time of follow-up.

An index of profile shape and scatter, d^2 prime, was used as a

correspondence measure (Cronbach & Gleser, 1953; Rounds & Dawis, Note 2) in these analyses. The lower the d^2 prime (that is, the smaller the difference between need and reinforcer profiles), the higher the correspondence (C_{N-R}). Thus, negative correlations between d^2 prime and satisfaction scores are expected.

Results

The subjects' mean score on the JSB was 16.71 with a standard deviation of 4.45. The mean and standard deviation of the correspondence scores was 14.33 and 4.45 respectively. The correlation between the JSB score and the correspondence index score was -.42, statistically significant at the .01 level. As shown in Table 3, the cross-classification of the subjects by satisfaction and correspondence resulted in a chi-square of 6.78, statistically significant at the .05 level. The lambda was .30. (This statistical index shows the proportional reduction in the probability of error by specifying the independent variable.) Therefore, in the prediction of satisfaction from correspondence, knowledge of a subject's correspondence score reduces the probability of error on the average by 30 percent. These results support the correspondence hypothesis.

As shown in Table 4 the effect of the moderator variables is reflected in the correlation coefficients obtained in the subgroups. The highest correlation coefficients were found for the female subgroup (-.42), for the "somewhat helpful" vocational assessment experience subgroup (-.80), and for the "high" rated agreement of plans and vocational behavior subgroup (-.49), all statistically significant at the .01 level. In contrast, the correlation coefficients for the male subgroup, the "not helpful" and "very helpful" vocational assessment experience subgroups, and the low rated agreement subgroup were lower and generally not statistically significant (the exception being the coefficient for the "very helpful"

vocational assessment experience subgroup, which was statistically significant). In addition, the correlation coefficients for the "not helpful" vocational assessment experience subgroup and the low rated agreement subgroup were positive and, therefore, in the direction opposite that predicted.

Conclusion

In summary, this report has presented an outline of the design of the WAP Follow-up Study along with some preliminary results. The results reported here support Theory of Work Adjustment Proposition III that satisfaction is a function of need-reinforcer correspondence. These results also lend support to earlier findings of a relationship between need-reinforcer correspondence and satisfaction (Betz, 1969; Rounds & Dawis, Note 2).

Additional results of this study suggest that the moderating effect of certain variables should be taken into account in the prediction of satisfaction. If replicated, these results indicate that Proposition III is more applicable for female clients, clients who follow vocational plans decided upon in vocational assessment, and clients who report a "somewhat helpful" vocational assessment experience.

Future investigations will examine the replicability of these findings at other time points and across other subject populations.

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